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New York

President:	Mr. Moraes Cabral	(Portugal)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Mashabane
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2011/675)

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Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2011/675)

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting. On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Enver Hoxhaj to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/675, the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Farid Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: The report before the Council (S/2011/675) details the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from 16 July to 15 October 2011. Since my last briefing to the Council, on 30 August (see S/PV.6604), the Council has met twice, on 15 September (S/PV.6616 and S/PV.6617) and 28 September, and has been briefed on the situation in the north of Kosovo, which remains precarious and warrants the attention and leadership of the Council.

Since mid-October, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) has consolidated perimeters at Gates 1 and 31 and has attempted to remove some of the Kosovo Serb roadblocks. Those attempts have resulted in occasional clashes with the Serb protesters. The gates have remained closed to traffic owing to the barricades erected by Kosovo Serb residents in the north, who have continued to object to the presence, albeit symbolic at the moment, of customs and police officials from the Pristina institutions. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) continues to transport Pristina officials to the gates by helicopter. In response, the northern Kosovo Serbs refuse EULEX the freedom of movement throughout the north. Meanwhile, KFOR's ability to conduct patrols and access its bases in the north is unpredictable, as convoys are sporadically blocked at the barricades when accompanied by EULEX or when carrying heavy engineering equipment.

On the night of 23 to 24 November, KFOR attempted to dismantle an unmanned barricade at Dudin krš, close to the northern Mitrovica bypass. That attempt sparked a violent clash with local Serb residents, who attacked KFOR soldiers with rocks and vehicles. According to KFOR, 21 of its soldiers, personnel from Germany, Hungary and Portugal, were injured in the incident.

In the morning of 28 November, KFOR soldiers took over and removed the Kosovo Serb roadblock at a village west of Zubin Potok. KFOR said that, during the operation, it used water cannons, tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets. KFOR also reported that two of its soldiers were wounded by small arms fire. The situation calmed down for a few hours, but the violence resumed late in the afternoon, with Kosovo Serb demonstrators throwing Molotov cocktails at KFOR troops, injuring an additional 23 soldiers. Some 15 Serb demonstrators reportedly received treatment for the injuries they sustained during the clashes. The situation today has been peaceful, although local Kosovo Serb protesters are still present at the site.

Those incidents marked a clear escalation in the level of tension and violence in the north. UNMIK has expressed serious concern at those acts of violence and has condemned the shootings targeting KFOR soldiers. President Jahjaga issued a statement condemning the attacks on KFOR, while President Tadić of Serbia this morning called on KFOR to avoid the use of force and asked the Kosovo Serbs to remove the barricades.

Regrettably, the situation in the north has become intertwined with the politics of the Serbian elections to

be held next spring and with the current political dynamics in Pristina.

UNMIK and its international partners have taken several initiatives to contain the current situation and to help to bring into focus its underlying causes, which deserve the attention and careful examination of this Council. We are working hard to help to dispel tensions and create an atmosphere in which durable solutions will be possible. Accordingly, we have actively sought out interlocutors from across the political spectrum — in Pristina, northern Kosovo and Belgrade — to promote efforts to find common ground and engage in constructive dialogue. We have urged all sides to explore ways and opportunities to communicate more effectively with one another. Our core messages have been to show patience, refrain from the use of force, avoid violence and support the Security Council-mandated international presences in the fulfilment of their responsibilities by not impeding their freedom of movement in the north.

One element of our strategy of engagement has already borne some fruit. The various sides have toned down their rhetoric, through which they tended to speak to their respective constituencies with inadequate regard for the misunderstandings that their remarks could create. I am pleased to report to the Council that that advice has been heeded and is being positively implemented in Pristina and Belgrade.

It should be noted that, without progress at the political level, EULEX and KFOR will continue to face difficulties in fulfilling their mandates north of the Ibar River, and that previous relative successes in building a functional and multi-ethnic Kosovo police presence there will be jeopardized. Recent attacks targeting Kosovo police officers in Zubin Potok, notably the attack on the residence of the Chief of the Investigation Unit and a hand grenade attack directed at the police station, which appear to be related to the local political situation, seem to reflect the currently tense situation in the north and may cause further impediments to effective policing.

Despite KFOR's general posture to avoid forceful action in the north, the situation continues to be extremely volatile, and the combined factors of frustration, fear and mistrust could easily and quickly provide the spark that could ignite violence, as was demonstrated by the recent clashes. At the same time, other incidents, such as the killing of a Kosovo Serb and the wounding of three others in the Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani neighbourhood in northern Mitrovica on 9 November only serve to exacerbate the ethnic tensions. Consequently, the situation calls for strong, united leadership from the international community.

In light of all this, the resumption of the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on 21 November, after a hiatus that followed Pristina's attempt to take control of the gates on 25 July, should be welcomed by all. The dialogue provides an appropriate forum for the discussion of a way forward that would represent a European solution for the two crossing points. We should encourage the sides to maintain their engagement in good faith, and to work closely with the EU facilitator, whose leadership is key to the process, to reach agreement on such a solution.

At the same dialogue meeting, and following on an earlier agreement in July, it was agreed that the European University Association will be asked to certify diplomas issued by universities of each party for use by the other in connection with further education and/or public employment. Regional cooperation was also discussed, with the parties agreeing that they would return to the issue at their next meeting, scheduled for tomorrow, with a view to reaching a final agreement. The parties also reviewed the process of implementation of previously reached agreements on cadastre, civil registry and freedom of movement, and committed themselves to making rapid progress in this process. It is important to ensure that the momentum of this dialogue, in terms of both reaching agreements and of their implementation, be maintained.

This period has seen an increase of incidents affecting minority communities elsewhere in Kosovo, including the killing of a Kosovo Croat and the wounding of another in southern Kosovo on 2 October, and the killing of a Kosovo Serb and injuring of two others in western Kosovo on 20 October. While it is unclear whether these cases were ethnically motivated, it is a fact that criminal incidents affecting members of minority communities weaken these communities' perception of their safety and security. It is important to note that the number of criminal incidents affecting minorities has also increased compared to the same period one year ago, which, considering the present situation, has a greater negative impact upon these communities' perception of their safety and security.

UNMIK is carefully and closely following the trend of such incidents and is engaging both with local police and community leaders, as well as with EULEX, to intensify efforts to resolve all inter-ethnic criminal cases, which are particularly damaging to the prospects for peace and reconciliation. More importantly, UNMIK is adding its voice to that of others in the international community calling for more active and effective efforts on the part of political leaders to make use of their leadership positions in order to help change the atmosphere in which inter-ethnic crime is tacitly tolerated.

Perceptions of safety and security are one of the key elements affecting minority returns. We continue to observe with concern the recent decline in the rate of such returns to Kosovo. While vocal opposition to returns has diminished, in early November a public protest by some 200 members of the receiving Kosovo-Albanian community in a formerly mixed village in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality prevented a visit by Serb internally displaced persons, who were escorted away by the Kosovo police after one of their minivans was stoned outside the meeting venue. We are concerned by the incident, but note that the municipal leadership has publicly denounced the receiving community's opposition, and has taken action to reschedule the visit to the community.

There is better news regarding the preservation of Serbian Orthodox heritage sites. I am pleased to report that since spring 2009, when the Kosovo Police gradually started to assume responsibility for security arrangements at protected sites, there has been a decrease of incidents at these sites. Currently, ethnically mixed teams of Kosovo Police are in charge of security arrangements at 21 sites, mostly churches and monasteries. Although the Serbian Orthodox Church assesses the situation around the church sites to be fragile and has undertaken some physical protection measures of its own, the best guarantee for the long-term security of these sites is the development of positive relations between the Church and local representatives of the Kosovo-Albanian community, in which some senior clerics are actively engaged. The continued support of the Kosovo authorities for the established mechanisms for the special protection and reconstruction of Orthodox sites, including the Reconstruction and Implementation Commission, would contribute to this process.

There has been only modest progress in the clarification of the fates and location of missing persons. In this regard, I wish to reiterate the call on all those who have information on the fates and locations of the missing to come forward and pass that information on to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Finally, I wish briefly to update the Council on the steps taken by EULEX to investigate the allegations contained in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's resolution 1782 (2011), "Investigation of allegations of inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo". A Special Investigative Task Force has been set up and has taken over the preliminary investigation launched by EULEX into the allegations. The lead prosecutor announced that he had secured Albania's commitment to cooperating in the investigation, and declared his commitment to following the trail of evidence wherever it may lead. He recently met with the Presidents of Kosovo, Albania and Serbia, as well as with war crimes prosecutors in the three capitals. As noted in the Secretary-General's report,

> "Belgrade remains of the view that an independent body, with investigative powers in Albania and beyond, should be established by the Security Council to lead the investigation." (*S/2011/675, para. 29*)

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the Council for their support for UNMIK, and in particular for continuing efforts to contribute to solutions that not only accord with the values and purposes of the United Nations, but contribute towards the fulfilment of the aspirations of the people of the region to a more peaceful and more prosperous future as part of Europe. We count upon the Council's continued support for our efforts to tackle the immediate and delicate problems described in the present report of the Secretary-General. Moreover, we hope that the Council will assist us by putting the full weight of its authority behind the messages we are sending to the parties, in particular concerning their respective leaderships.

While some speak of Kosovo as a frozen conflict, I believe that the situation is fluid and dynamic. This potentially entails greater dangers, but there also exist genuine opportunities to pursue a viable, sustainable resolution that could overcome the long-standing

tensions. It is my belief that this can best be achieved through the stewardship of this Council. Above all, I believe that what is needed at the moment is for sides to master the goodwill, pragmatism, boldness, courage and resolve necessary to achieve genuine progress. No less than the taking of full statesman-like responsibility is demanded, if the present opportunities for moving forward towards peaceful, durable solutions are not to be missed.

The President: I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Mr. Jeremić (Serbia): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting of the Security Council pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999).

I welcome the presence of Special Representative Farid Zarif. I congratulate him on his recent appointment and thank him for his remarks. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo remains a crucial pillar of peace and stability in the province.

At the beginning of my statement, I would like to once again express our deep gratitude to the substantial majority of the world's nations that respect Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. By continuing to support the principle of the inviolability of borders of United Nations States Members, they are preventing a dangerous precedent that could be repeated in any part of the world, with devastating consequences for international peace and stability.

The security situation in our southern province of Kosovo has been greatly aggravated since the end of the previous reporting period. Serbia's repeated warnings that unilateral forceful action would adversely affect stability kept being ignored by some key actors. Despite considerable diplomatic efforts, it has not been possible to reach consensus in the Chamber that unilateralism and the use of force are unacceptable. As a result, today everything is much more difficult, as positions harden in the light of deteriorating conditions on the ground. It is truly frustrating that all of this was eminently avoidable, had everyone had enough patience to seek solutions by exclusively peaceful means and through dialogue.

At the beginning of the three-month period covered by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/675), it was possible to be cautiously optimistic, as certain aspects of the situation in Kosovo seemed to be improving. The fifth round of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina had just taken place, on 2 July, and had produced status-neutral agreements in some important areas. Rather than trying to build on the positive momentum, however, a choice was made in Pristina to attempt to unilaterally alter the reality on the ground, clearly outside of the framework provided by the dialogue.

That happened twice during the reporting period. The first time was on 25 July, when the territory's ethnic-Albanian authorities ordered the deployment to North Kosovo of the so-called paramilitary Regional Operational Support Unit (ROSU), with the aim of seizing the administrative checkpoints known as Gates 1 and 31. According to the report, this was "not coordinated with the international presences or the communities on the ground" (*S/2011/675, para. 3*). As a consequence, dynamics changed overnight — "a significant deterioration in the security situation" (*ibid., para. 10*) in North Kosovo. The report also states that "In reaction to the actions of Pristina, local Kosovo Serbs, who continue to reject the authority of the Kosovo institutions, erected roadblocks" (*ibid., para. 4*). Thanks in part to the swift, yet measured, response by Belgrade, the situation was contained and did not spin dangerously out of control. The overall state of affairs in North Kosovo had ceased to worsen by the end of August, although tensions remained high.

It is against that backdrop that the sixth round of dialogue took place in Brussels, on 2 September. Another status-neutral solution was reached, that time on customs stamps. We were led to believe that, in the period ahead, implementation would be discussed in good faith so that underlying procedures could be agreed and put into practice. Instead, for the second time in as many months, an attempt was made to impose an outcome that was clearly outside of the dialogue framework on the very same issue, namely, Gates 1 and 31.

On 7 September, Hashim Thaçi, the so-called Prime Minister of Kosovo, explicitly stated his purpose, that is, to "preserve and assume control over the territorial integrity of the Republic of Kosovo". He also said that "Kosovo customs officials, appointed by the Kosovo Customs, will be present; Kosovo border police, appointed by the Kosovo Police, will be present". A document entitled "Kosovo Police Operational Plan" confirmed that intention. It reads:

"All operations will be conducted under Kosovo sovereignty and in accordance with Kosovo laws and regulations".

That is manifestly incompatible with resolution 1244 (1999), and drastically deviates from the status-neutral framework of the United Nations. It also ignores the terms of the Secretary-General's six-point agreement, which was welcomed by the Council in November 2008 and which states very precisely that "international customs officers appointed in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) will be reinstated at gates 1 and 31".

Nevertheless, both the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) chose to support the operation, which began on 16 September. Explicit warnings were voiced in the Chamber on the eve of the announced action that this would effectively mean stepping beyond the limits of KFOR's and EULEX's respective mandates, in violation of resolution 1244 (1999). Not only would that undermine the centrality of the dialogue process, but it was also blatantly obvious that it would heighten tensions in North Kosovo, and would surely result in the loss of the international missions' legitimacy in the eyes of the local population.

Unfortunately, the inevitable happened. Residents of North Kosovo responded by reinforcing existing roadblocks and erecting new ones. Their resolute determination to resist the imposition of a decisively unwanted regime has become one of the most conspicuous elements of the reality on the ground. Regretfully, some of the occasional clashes turned violent and resulted in injuries on both sides of the divide. Serbia's strong condemnation of the use of force by any party has always been swift and unequivocal.

At this particularly delicate moment, it is critical that we send the right messages and draw the appropriate lessons from the recent incident at Dudin krš, near Zveçan, and yesterday's at Jagnjenica. Both began in similar fashion. Unprovoked, KFOR troops rapidly approached the barricades and immediately started to dismantle them with heavy equipment. That caused the situation to escalate. Villagers from neighbouring areas began to arrive to defend their positions. In both cases, scores of civilians and dozens of soldiers were injured.

We call upon all stakeholders on the ground in North Kosovo — KFOR and EULEX officials, as well as local community leaders — to engage in dialogue and work together to restore calm immediately. The removal of barricades is clearly in the interest of peace and stability, but it should be achieved exclusively through peaceful means. We must find the way out of the vicious circle of violence, in which only extremism thrives. It is indicative, however, that almost every time a new round of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is due to take place — in the present case, tomorrow — unilateralism suddenly comes back to the fore.

Negotiations conducted in good faith are predicated on abstaining from the use of instruments of compulsion. Those are mutually exclusive concepts. Either one negotiates in good faith or tries to resolve the issue through forceful imposition. The choice could not be clearer: peaceful dialogue or unilateral action. Serbia is ready for the former, and categorically rejects the latter. We therefore echo the report's conclusion that "sensitive issues relating to northern Kosovo can be resolved only through peaceful means, taking into account the views of the communities on the ground" (*ibid., para. 56*).

While we have rightfully focused our attention on events taking place in the North, we must not ignore the fact that the situation in the South has gotten worse, as well. The report underlines that, in comparison to the same period last year, "the number of violent incidents affecting the Serb population [south of the Ibër/Ibar] increased following the July events" (*ibid., para. 20*). In addition to the brutal murder of a Kosovo Serb returnee, the report also lists numerous acts of desecration and vandalism against Serbian Orthodox Church holy sites and cemeteries, vehicle stonings, arson attacks, burglaries, theft of farm equipment and drinking well contaminations. The report does not indicate that any of those hate crimes have been solved, or even that anyone has been charged with committing them.

Unfortunately, the report omits a number of other incidents that further darken the overall picture of the situation on the ground in the province. I will limit myself to mentioning just one of them, but it is typical. On 28 July, on the outskirts of the village of Doganović, on the Vitina-Štrpce road, two ethnic Serbs from Klokot were stopped by a ROSU contingent. They were on their way to sell vegetables at the Štrpce

farmers market. They were forced out of their vehicle and their Serbian papers — acceptable under the terms of the dialogue — were torn up. Their license plates — also acceptable under the terms of the dialogue — were taken away from them. The ROSU officers then proceeded to beat them mercilessly. Many similar incidents have been taking place, but I believe this one is illustrative enough.

Under such shocking circumstances, it is no wonder that, for Kosovo Serb internally displaced persons, the "pace of the returns remains markedly slow" (*ibid., para. 32*). In that quarter, only 96 ethnic Serbs went back to the province, less than half of the number who returned in the same period last year. The future looks even bleaker. According to a document of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees entitled "UNHCR Global Appeal 2012-2013 — Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res, 1244)", "the potential for returns is almost exhausted".

Almost a year ago, the Council of Europe released a deeply disturbing report entitled "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo". Since that time, excruciatingly little has been done to uncover the truth about those allegations, especially considering the uniquely heinous nature of the charges. In that regard, the recent appointment of Clint Williamson as lead prosecutor for the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force is a welcome development. We will assist him and his team in any way that we can, for we believe they can make an invaluable contribution to uncovering what occurred inside Kosovo itself.

That, however, remains manifestly insufficient, for the alleged harvesting and smuggling of organs of innocent Serbian civilians took place beyond that territory. Despite all protestations to the contrary, it is indisputable that EULEX cannot operate at full capacity anywhere outside Kosovo. In other words, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo has neither an adequate mandate nor sufficient temporal and territorial jurisdiction to carry out an investigation that would be comprehensive in scope. The EULEX Special Investigative Task Force has no ability to enforce the cooperation of all concerned. Only this body can do that.

We are not opposed to the centrality of EULEX in an investigation mechanism. But it must be both empowered by, and accountable to, the Security Council. That has been the standard applied in each previous instance involving serious war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Balkans, whichever side the perpetrators belonged to and irrespective of their political roles. There is no compelling reason not to make a comprehensive, independent investigation accountable to the whole world in this case as well.

That is the only way to guarantee fairness and transparency and to prevent doubts about anyone's full commitment. A few days ago, however, the Task Force spokesman said that details of the investigation it is conducting would remain confidential until it has come to an end. That might take years, he added. That is outrageous and unacceptable. If senior officials of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia brief the Security Council every six months, why should those tasked with the organs trafficking case not do so as well? We have already presented some proposals on the investigation mechanism, and we urge the Council to act upon them.

Come what may, the truth cannot possibly rise to the surface without ironclad witness protection guarantees. At this point, they simply do not exist. The recent mysterious death of a key witness in an important war crimes trial has reinforced the perception that EULEX is unable to guarantee the safety of those in its protective custody. The defendant in the case in question is Fatmir Limaj, a powerful former minister in Hashim Thaçi's Cabinet. He has been identified by the Council of Europe, together with several others, including Thaçi himself, as having played vital roles as co-conspirators in various categories of criminal activity.

The witness, Mr. Agim Zogaj, had been under the protection of EULEX, but somehow ended up alone and dead in a park in Duisburg, Germany. Local authorities have stated that they were unaware that he required 24-hour protection. In an authentic diary excerpt published posthumously by the Pristina daily newspaper Koha Ditore, Zogaj addresses Limaj directly, writing that "for years now my children fear you more than they feared Milosevic". In another passage, written just a few days before his death, he suggests that EULEX did not have the capacity to protect him. That raises the question of whether he truly committed suicide, as the local police have preliminarily concluded.

My Government is resolved to undertake all the necessary measures to pave the way for establishing a comprehensive peace between Serbs and Albanians. We will keep working relentlessly in its pursuit, despite all the setbacks caused by unilateralism. Dialogue is the only vehicle to reach that goal. Its intention — as stated in a General Assembly resolution that was adopted by acclamation and initiated the dialogue, is to "improve the lives of the people" (*resolution 64/298, para. 2*). That is its most important, status-neutral objective. The talks are not an exercise in enforcing either party's legal position. They are focused on practical considerations. If both sides are prepared to be flexible, common ground can surely be found.

A great twentieth-century leader famously once called for a fresh start. "Let us begin anew", he said,

> "remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate. Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belabouring those problems which divide us".

We too must reinvigorate our efforts. It is essential that all stakeholders pledge to make the dialogue the sole mechanism within which differences will be brought to the fore.

We are facing a worsening situation in Kosovo. It necessitates more active engagement by this body. I call on the Security Council to make sure that no more forceful unilateral acts are allowed to take place, and that it does so in clear, unequivocal, unbiased and status-neutral terms. I urge this body to take that crucial step without any further hesitation.

If we are genuinely concerned about peace and stability in Kosovo — if re-establishing security and improving the quality of life for the people on the ground is our objective — then there can be no justification for refusing to heed such a call right now. A failure to act would be a disappointing abdication of the responsibility entrusted to this Council by the world's family of nations. Taking charge of the present moment, on the other hand, cannot but enhance the enduring benefit and honour of the founding principles of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Enver Hoxhaj.

Mr. Hoxhaj: It is a great honour for me to address the Security Council again regarding the recent developments in Kosovo. I also express the gratitude of the people of the Republic of Kosovo for the Council's support for our young but functional and multi-ethnic democracy.

Before us is the most recent report of the Secretary-General on Kosovo (S/2011/675). The situation outlined in that report helps to remind us that Kosovo is an important State in the Balkans. In its fourth year as an independent nation, Kosovo has proven to be a factor of peace and stability and security in the region and throughout Europe.

Allow me to speak about four key developments in Kosovo.

The first deals with the further consolidation of Kosovo's statehood. In the last three months, we made crucial progress in strengthening our institutions. Kosovo has maintained institutional stability, and there are visible improvements in all aspects of life, including democratic governance, the rule of law and a market-based economy. It has proved to be a cohesive State. A report published recently by the United Nations Development Programme states that there has been a general increase in people's satisfaction with the work of the key executive, legislative and judicial institutions.

The democratization process is going in the right direction. There is an open and democratic dialogue that includes all stakeholders in our society and that covers a wide range of different policies and issues. That is illustrated by the work of the commission for constitutional changes and the commission for a new election law. Cooperation between all political parties and other, non-political actors is excellent. The Kosovo Assembly has passed 33 laws on issues such as municipal cooperation, missing persons, education, cadastral regulations and international legal cooperation in criminal matters.

We are committed to strengthening the rule of law. The Kosovo justice system is engaged in fighting organized crime and corruption. There have been concrete results on cases involving war crimes, organized crime and corruption. Kosovo has had excellent preparation with the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia on all those cases. Once again, we consider the rule of law fundamental

for Kosovo's development and the development of the Western Balkans.

Like other countries in the region, we have had many challenges this year. Despite the fact that our people are optimistic about the prospects for economic development, unemployment remains one of the key problems that we face today. For that reason, we are working very hard to ensure economic growth and social welfare.

Kosovo has maintained macroeconomic stability and continuous economic growth. While Europe is facing a debt crisis, Kosovo remains the least indebted country in the Balkans. The new budget law was presented to Parliament earlier this month. It foresees a 6 per cent increase in gross domestic production for the next year. We aim to accomplish this through investments, exports and consumption, which in turn will provide jobs and help ease unemployment. We consider economic growth a crucial element of our social cohesion and our efforts at ethnic integration.

In this reporting period we made significant progress in our efforts to participate in regional and international initiatives. We have been and we remain a responsible member of the international community. The size and geographic scope of Kosovo's recognition is global, which demonstrates that Kosovo's independence is a geopolitical reality. In that connection I would like to thank the Governments of Gabon, Kuwait and the Ivory Coast for their decisions to recognize independent Kosovo. We strongly believe that many other countries will follow suit in the near future. Following the firm verdict of the International Court of Justice, which confirmed that the declaration of Kosovo's independence did not violate international law and resolution 1244 (1999), there are no legal reasons to further delay the recognition of Kosovo's independence.

The second point I wish to make has to do with the process of European integration. We see Kosovo, like other countries in the Balkans, as a critical part of Europe in terms of history, geography and culture. However, political integration, in terms of the European integration process, is the best framework for ensuring long-term peace, stability and prosperity in our region. At the same time, it is also the best way for the region to overcome divisions, through a process of reform and mutual support.

I would like to inform the Council that on 12 October we received the European Commission's progress report on Kosovo, which correctly reflects the situation on the ground, stating that "Kosovo has made progress as regards the political criteria in a number of important areas". The work of the central and local governments and relevant departments is praised. Progress was also mentioned in our decentralization efforts in building multi-ethnic institutions and a diverse society.

Like our neighbours, we aspire to secure visa liberalization for all citizens and contractual relations with the European Union. Due to our progress, the report delivered the long-awaited news about launching a dialogue on the visa liberalization process towards the end of this year. That is a remarkable achievement for Kosovo. Now we also hope that the European Council will support us by concluding a contractual relationship in the form of a trade agreement or even a stabilization and association agreement.

I believe that Kosovo should not be a forgotten and isolated country. In 2011, Kosovo made important steps towards European integration. We hope that 2012 will be the year of a European Kosovo.

The third important point for the Government of Kosovo and for the future of the region is the situation in the north of the country. In our previous meetings in this Chamber, I presented my Government's views with respect to the situation in the north of Kosovo. Again, I consider it very important to inform the Council about the latest developments.

The state of affairs in the north of Kosovo is complex. It threatens the functionality of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic State and is a serious threat to regional peace and security. The status quo has been tolerated since 1999, in violation of resolution 1244 (1999). Under these circumstances, the Government of Serbia has maintained control and has sponsored a complete, illegal system of its structures. Security and police units, as well as paramilitary and defence structures, are still present and operating in that part of Kosovo. This is taking place in direct violation of resolution 1244 (1999) and of the Kumanovo Agreement, which explicitly prohibits Serbia from maintaining a security and armed forces presence.

The operation of illegal Serbian structures has posed a significant obstacle to the integration of the local population and to the implementation of the rule

of law. This is the only corner of Europe that has not had free and democratic elections or participation in democratic institutions in the last twelve years. It is also the only case in Europe in which one country, through its security forces, is controlling part of another country. In that area, where law and order are absent, criminal activities and organized crime have flourished. As we have seen, besides the economic implications for Kosovo, Serbia and the rest of the Balkans, such a black-hole situation has seriously threatened regional security.

The illegal security structures of organized crime aim to create a status quo in order to safeguard their illegal economic activities, such as smuggling, trafficking and others. With the support of the Serbian Government, illegal structures have held the local population hostage and threaten peace and order.

It is necessary to mention here that since 1999 we have been a great financial contributor to the local institutions in that part of Kosovo. Just this year, we invested over €5 million in different projects, and we will do more. Unfortunately, Belgrade has at all times interfered and denied every form of cooperation for the good of the local Serb community there.

The Government of Kosovo has shown patience for a year. We have insisted that the situation should be resolved in cooperation with international mechanisms. We have been and remain committed to resolving this situation through cooperation, not confrontation. But our approach — to give peace and understanding a chance — has been misused by the Government of Serbia. Serbia refers to resolution 1244 (1999) over and over again, as it did today. However, Serbia has done everything in its power to prevent the implementation of that resolution in the north of Kosovo and to prevent the development of the multi-ethnic character of our society there.

The same has happened with the Ahtisaari Plan since 2008. Most of the provisions of the Ahtisaari Plan are aimed at ensuring the best mechanisms and rights for the Kosovo Serbs. To date, Kosovo has implemented more than 90 per cent of the Plan, and the integration of the Kosovo Serbs across the country is a reality. The Plan could not be implemented in the north because Serbia never showed any interest in improving the lives of the local Serbs there.

When I mention the north of Kosovo, I am specifically referring to the three and a half municipalities: the northern part of the city of Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zveçan and Zubin Potok. Thirteen thousand people live in this part of Kosovo, but the majority of Kosovo Serbs live across Kosovo, and around 100,000 take part in all levels of Kosovo institutions.

The decision of the Kosovo Government to establish the rule of law and to enforce reciprocity measures in trade relations was not a violent act. It was an attempt to establish the rule of law and order and to implement the agreement on Customs stamps reached in Brussels. The Government of Kosovo has been working in close coordination with international partners to secure basic freedom of movement and the rule of law.

What is currently happening in that part of Kosovo, even as we meet here today? The situation remains unchanged, blocked and threatening. Trucks, rocks and various obstacles are blocking most of the roads in the three municipalities in the north. A total of 18 roadblocks are preventing the free movement of people and goods. Even the troops of the Kosovo Force (KFOR), a force mandated by resolution 1244 (1999), and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) are prevented from crossing those barricades. This poses a real threat to security within Kosovo and to regional peace and stability.

At the same time, we are concerned about the war narratives that are still present in the Serbian political discourse. That was confirmed last week by the statements made by members of the Serbian Government, who, when talking about Kosovo, said that Serbia could not and would not watch peacefully if a red line was crossed. They sent threatening messages and promoted the concept of a balance of fear between Kosovo and Serbia.

It is necessary to mention here that since 25 July, the Kosovo institutions have not been the ones to use violence. The opposite is true. The illegal Serbian security structures have systematically used violence against citizens and peacekeeping soldiers. In the last two weeks alone, more than 54 soldiers have been wounded, including in the escalation of violence that occurred yesterday.

We have been patient, hoping that our neighbour, Serbia, would understand that roadblocks and threats are not solutions to our problems. We do not wish to be part of destabilizing scenarios, and we will not tolerate

being threatened by destructive forms of intimidation. We are a constructive partner in resolving the issues we face, but we will not give up our serenity or the functioning of our young, democratic State. We are working to improve our good-neighbourly relations, always oriented towards dialogue and European integration.

This brings me to my last point: the technical dialogue. Our dedication to peace and stability and to a European future for the whole region led us to engage in a dialogue with Serbia that is facilitated by the European Union. This technical dialogue is aimed at finding solutions to the practical issues that our people are faced with every day.

Dialogue is a very important instrument for us to build good-neighbourly relations as two independent States. We are willing to put the past behind us and work together for a better future. It is for that reason that we are participating in this dialogue in a constructive manner and in good faith. We are working towards outcomes that improve the lives of all citizens in Kosovo and Serbia. The resolution of issues concerning the freedom of movement of people and goods will greatly benefit people in both countries.

Our goal is to bring services closer to all citizens of Kosovo, and all of the solutions that we have proposed so far are aimed at bringing communities together, not dividing them. I do not believe that there should be, or could be, ethnic electricity, ethnic mobile telephones or ethnic car plates, as these concepts are against European values and norms. We will therefore accept all solutions that are European solutions. Such solutions should be clear and easy to implement and should not produce more parallelism.

But let me make clear the position of my Government on the dialogue. Kosovo is and will be part of this dialogue. We welcome the fact that Serbia, after some months of boycott, returned to the negotiating table last week. However, we should not understand dialogue as a process that involves simply attending meetings, without any concrete results. We are very much interested in outcomes and in the implementation of agreements.

As I reported here at previous meetings in July and September, Kosovo and Serbia agreed on many important issues. To date, only one agreement has been implemented by Serbia. This undermines the trust between both sides and hinders the prospects for new agreements.

Kosovo supports the integration of the region into the European Union. However, we will never accept countries aspiring to integration, such as Serbia, undermining Kosovo's statehood and controlling part of its territory through illegal security structures. We therefore believe that the time has come for Serbia to remove the roadblocks, dismantle its security structures and accept the European model of integrated border management between the two countries.

We are deeply committed to the implementation of the entire Ahtisaari Plan as the best model for the integration of the Kosovo Serbs. According to the Plan, Kosovo Serbs in these three municipalities can have full self-governance, something that no other community can enjoy today in Europe.

We expect that the next round of dialogue, scheduled for tomorrow, will take place and will bring concrete outcomes in the areas of regional cooperation, integrated border management, telecommunications and energy. But let me repeat: we are very interested in reaching agreement on those issues, and, more importantly, implementing them on the ground. We hope that Serbia is not using the dialogue to score political points in order to get European Union candidate status. We also hope that it will not boycott it again after 9 December, when the European Council will take important decisions for the Balkans.

Let me conclude by saying that the Government of Kosovo is committed to providing all its citizens the peaceful and prosperous future that they deserve. We are determined to integrate the people in this part of Kosovo with the rest of the country and maintain our internationally recognized borders. We will make every effort to communicate with the Kosovo Serbs in the north, and we will spare no resource to enable the creation of free and democratic institutions in the north, so that people can live free of fear and intimidation. The Government of Kosovo will exercise its legitimate right to guarantee law, order and peace in its entire territory. The municipalities in the north are part of Kosovo. They will be so forever. We will never accept a status quo, a frozen situation or ethnic partition, as senior-level officials in Serbia are promoting.

I think that, after 20 years, the time has come for Serbia to define its national interests in terms of

political integration within Europe and economic development, and not in terms of territory. Serbia should come to terms with independent Kosovo. We remain willing to normalize relations with Serbia. The policy goal of my Government is the integration of Kosovo into the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Finally, the Security Council can count on Kosovo for cooperation in order to maintain international peace and security. As the report of the Secretary-General shows, a threat to Kosovo's peace is indeed a threat to regional security and stability.

The President: I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for his briefing and for the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), covering the period of July to October (S/2011/675). I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Foreign Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Enver Hoxhaj for their statements.

There have been a few positive developments during the reporting period. We note that during the European Union-facilitated dialogue in Brussels on 2 September, Serbia agreed to recognize Kosovo's customs stamps. The two sides also reached agreements on the issue of cadastre records and on establishing a fully reliable cadastre in Kosovo in order to provide legal certainty and to protect the rights of people with legitimate claims to property. In addition, both parties expressed their commitment to look further into the technical and political aspects of issues such as telecommunications, energy and university diplomas. The two sides also continued to cooperate on the issue of missing persons.

While such agreements are welcome, they have been overshadowed by the situation on the ground in northern Kosovo. We note with concern that the overall security situation was negatively affected by the developments on border crossings and that there was a 24 per cent increase in incidents affecting minority communities. Those developments also prevented further talks between the parties until about a week ago. The incidents during the reporting period and those that took place yesterday have underlined the fragility of the security situation in the area. That requires careful handling.

While we welcome the efforts made by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) to investigate allegations of inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo and note the appointment of the lead prosecutor, Serbia continues to be interested in a role of the Security Council in that investigation. We continue to support the proposal for the creation of a mechanism that enjoys the support and confidence of all stakeholders.

We think that a number of unresolved issues are connected with the question of status, which can be resolved only through bilateral talks between the parties. While such talks are being facilitated by the European Union, it is necessary that the international presence in Kosovo, including UNMIK, EULEX and the Kosovo Force, act with strict neutrality and impartiality and in accordance with their respective mandates, including resolution 1244 (1999). They should also ensure that there is no violence or change of the status quo by force. Unilateral actions should be avoided, and the parties should resolve sensitive issues through peaceful means on the basis of consultations and engagement with all communities.

In conclusion, we call upon the concerned parties to resolve all issues concerning Kosovo through consultation and dialogue without resorting to violence or destabilizing unilateral action. Only thus can the aspirations of all peoples concerned be met and lasting peace and stability established in the region.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing. We welcome him in his new role as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I thank Foreign Minister Hoxhaj and Foreign Minister Jeremić for their presence here today and for their statements.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2011/675) highlights the challenges to long-term peace and security in Kosovo and the Balkan region. However, it also highlights the successes that Kosovo and the region have achieved, including the 2 September agreement by Belgrade and Pristina to recognize each other's customs stamps, as well as ongoing cooperation on cultural heritage projects. Despite the recent violence caused by the acts of a few extremists, the United States remains optimistic that

Kosovo and Serbia can eventually resolve their differences and that Kosovo will continue to develop the successful institutions of a democratic nation. I would like to make four points today.

First, we echo the Secretary-General's call for the Kosovo Force (KFOR) to continue its efforts to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo. The Council has affirmed that Kosovo is a single customs space. That is fully in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999) and was a key point in the Secretary-General's November 2008 report on UNMIK (S/2008/692), which the Council welcomed in its presidential statement of 26 November 2008 (S/PRST/2008/44). Kosovo therefore has the right to control its borders and to uphold the rule of law, in full cooperation with the international community. It cannot be considered unilateral action for Kosovo to enforce its customs controls. Moreover, Kosovo also coordinated its activities with the international community, including KFOR and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).

Furthermore, Kosovo announced its intention to establish full border and customs functions at the gates after Serbia agreed to recognize the Kosovo customs stamp at the 2 September dialogue. Kosovo established those functions, in accordance with an operational plan coordinated with EULEX and KFOR. The obstructions to freedom of movement are due to the actions of hard-line Kosovo Serb factions, with the support of illegal parallel institutions and, in some cases, with the endorsement of Serbian Government officials. We call on all actors, including the Serbian Government, to cooperate fully with KFOR and EULEX in the immediate removal of the remaining roadblocks, in ensuring proper controls at the borders and in supporting the rule of law through cooperation on the arrests of key criminal suspects. UNMIK can best facilitate those goals by clearly supporting the presence of Kosovo customs officials at the border gates and by emphasizing that Kosovo is a single customs space.

We remain deeply concerned by the violence in northern Kosovo during recent months, including the murder of a Kosovo police officer on 26 July; attacks on nine KFOR soldiers on 27 September; injuries to 21 KFOR soldiers on 23 and 24 November; and, on 25 November, injuries to over 25 KFOR soldiers, including two wounded by gunfire while attempting to remove roadblocks that obstructed freedom of movement.

It is a serious matter that such incidents occurred while Serbian security structures remained illegally deployed in those areas. Members of the Council should be unequivocal in condemning the violence perpetrated against KFOR and in supporting the Mission. Just as any attack on United Nations peacekeepers is unacceptable, so is any attack on KFOR.

My Government emphasizes that KFOR's actions have been and continue to be in complete accord with its mandate under resolution 1244 (1999). We commend KFOR for using minimal force in self-defence to de-escalate the situation, and we believe that Serbia's request to the Secretary-General for a special investigation into the events of 27 September is unwarranted.

Secondly, we welcome the progress that has been made by the European Union (EU) to facilitate a dialogue to date, but we note that a long list of critical issues remains unresolved. We commend the Government of Serbia for returning to the dialogue as of 21 November for the seventh meeting, in which the parties agreed on mutual acceptance of university diplomas, and we commend the Government of Kosovo for its progress in implementing previously reached agreements. We call on both sides to demonstrate flexibility as they return to the table tomorrow, 30 November. The European Union continues to have our full support in its facilitation of the dialogue. It is the primary — indeed, the only — high-level dialogue between the two countries and should be vigorously supported by all parties.

Thirdly, we would like to comment on some assertions in the Secretary-General's report. For example, the Government of Kosovo has substantially increased human and financial resources in support of its returnees, even though their number has decreased. Kosovo's funding for the reintegration of returnees increased tenfold from 2010 to 2011. In addition, the central Government has increased its coordination with municipalities and established new mechanisms for better addressing the needs of returnees. The low number of voluntary returns is not surprising, given difficult economic conditions and still unresolved property disputes. We also note that many potential returnees have integrated into their new places of residence over the past 12 years.

Furthermore, we do not agree with the claim that an embargo imposed by the Government of Kosovo has directly caused the supposed hardship in the Kosovo Serb community. Any denial of access to goods or services is a direct result of actions by northern Kosovo Serbs and their parallel institutions, which severely limited freedom of movement for people and goods by installing numerous barricades and using of threats and acts of violence. Neither KFOR nor the Government of Kosovo can be fairly accused of blocking the import of any goods.

My final point is that the United States fully supports Ambassador Clint Williamson in his new role as lead prosecutor for the international Special Investigative Task Force. The Task Force will continue the EULEX investigation into the allegations set forth in the report of the Council of Europe's Special Rapporteur, Dick Marty. EULEX's mandate is enshrined in Kosovo's Constitution and laws, and the EU Joint Action explicitly provides for EULEX to investigate and prosecute serious crimes, such as those alleged in the Marty report, and to do so independently. Furthermore, neighbouring States, including Serbia, have offered the Task Force their full cooperation. We believe there is therefore no need for the Security Council to interfere with EULEX's ongoing investigations.

The international community has invested extraordinary amounts of time and resources in maintaining peace and security in Kosovo and the Balkan region. The entire region is now on the threshold of fulfilling its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. This opportunity should not be squandered because of actions by a few extremists. In the long term, the multi-ethnic communities in Kosovo will bear full responsibility for their own future. They will decide whether their future will be characterized by deadlock and strife or dialogue and cooperation. In the short term, however, the international community must ensure that physical and political barriers do not prevent them for attaining their goals and obtaining their rights.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I would like to start by thanking the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing today. I am also pleased to welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr. Enver Hoxhaj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, and His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

The United Kingdom is grateful for the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/675), which tallies with much of the European Commission's own assessment of progress in Kosovo. A central theme of both reports, with which we agree, is that while Kosovo has made progress, substantial reforms are still required. Areas where Kosovo has made particular progress this year are judicial reform and migration. In his report, the Secretary-General notes the positive trend of the Kosovo authorities' increased efforts to fight organized crime, notably through coordinated actions against human trafficking, smuggling, money laundering and drug trafficking. The European Commission's offer of a formal dialogue on visa liberalization is testament to much hard work by the Kosovo Government with respect to judicial reform and migration. I also commend Kosovo's constructive engagement in the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue with Serbia.

But major challenges remain. The Commission's report correctly highlights that the rule of law and minority rights are areas where further effort is needed. I welcome the Kosovo Government's commitment to securing concrete progress on these issues, and its commitment to the task of preparing for eventual EU accession.

The Secretary-General's report notes the continuing challenges in northern Kosovo, and the briefing by Special Representative Zarif highlighted very worrying events over recent days. Many citizens there are still unable to lead normal lives. They face high levels of crime, unemployment and insecurity. We encourage the Kosovo Government to intensify efforts to demonstrate its commitment to its citizens in northern Kosovo, and the concrete benefits — for example, in the rule of law, education and unemployment — it is able to bring. I urge Mr. Hoxhaj and his colleagues to pursue this with vision and energy.

But others also share the responsibility for addressing current challenges. It is imperative that all actors refrain from taking any actions that threaten the stability and security of those living in northern Kosovo. As the Secretary-General's report notes, the two northern crossings authorized by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in

2001 remain effectively closed by illegal roadblocks. Those who have erected those roadblocks are undermining the welfare of their fellow citizens and should remove the roadblocks immediately. Let me be clear — there can be no excuse for any attempt to restrict freedom of movement in northern Kosovo.

Nor can there be any place for violence. We deeply regret the injuries and loss of life in recent months, and express our sympathies to the families of those affected. We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the attacks on NATO peacekeepers on 27 September, 23 November and, most recently, 28 November near Zubin Potok, where protesters used explosives and small arms against Kosovo Force (KFOR) troops. Two soldiers received gunshot wounds and more than 20 others were injured as a result of Monday's violence.

It is the responsibility of all who exercise influence in northern Kosovo, including the Government of Serbia, to work actively to deter violence and restore freedom of movement. They must also give consistent and unequivocal backing to both KFOR and the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) in the exercise of their legitimate mandates to guarantee security and freedom of movement.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General referred to the steps taken to investigate allegations of organized crime, including organ trafficking, in Kosovo. The United Kingdom welcomes the appointment of United States war crimes Ambassador Clint Williamson as head of the EU Special Investigative Task Force investigating allegations of organized crime, including organ trafficking, in Kosovo. We are also pleased that Ambassador Williamson has already been able to visit Pristina, Belgrade and Tirana. He and his Task Force have the United Kingdom's full support and confidence as they take forward their investigations in a thorough and professional manner. We are clear that EULEX has the appropriate authority and jurisdiction to take this important work forward.

The EU-facilitated dialogue is crucial to the European futures of both Kosovo and Serbia, and for the well-being of their citizens. Regional cooperation such as this is essential to the future stability and prosperity of the Western Balkans. Many of the challenges that Western Balkans countries face today, such as organized crime, can be effectively addressed only through close cooperation at both the technical and political levels.

The 21 November meeting of the dialogue was a welcome incremental step forward. Agreement was found on the mutual recognition of university diplomas, and constructive discussions were held on customs arrangements and Kosovo's participation in regional forums. Regional cooperation is an integral part of the EU accession process. That is why the United Kingdom welcomed the European Commission's emphasis on the importance of normalization of relations with Kosovo in its recent opinion on Serbia's application for EU membership. The United Kingdom is a firm supporter of Serbia's EU accession; we will do all we can to support that ambition.

There is much to welcome in the capture and extradition of Mladić and Karadžić, which served as historic moments for international justice and for the region and a testament to firm leadership. Serbia's legislative reform programme has been impressive. But it is how Serbia chooses to respond to the Commission's recommendations on Kosovo that will determine the next steps on its path towards the European Union.

Serbia must demonstrate that it is making progress in normalizing its relationship with Kosovo if EU member States are to be able to grant Serbia candidate status in December. That means, among other things, implementing fully those agreements already reached in the dialogue, engaging constructively with a view to securing agreements on other issues already under discussion, and taking concrete steps towards resolving the current tensions and restoration of freedom of movement in the north of Kosovo, including through cooperation with EULEX.

I referred a moment ago to the centrality of the dialogue to both countries' futures. I echo the call by the Secretary-General in his report for both Pristina and Belgrade to continue to show confidence in the dialogue. It is important that further progress be made at the next round of talks tomorrow. We urge both Kosovo and Serbia to work intensively and creatively towards achieving further agreements. Compromise and commitment will be essential.

Kosovo's progress as a viable independent State is irreversible. Its future belongs in the European Union along with all other countries in the Western

Balkans. My Government will continue to work tirelessly towards that goal.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his briefing. I listened attentively to the statements by Foreign Minister Jeremić and Mr. Hoxhaj.

For the last few days, the situation in northern Kosovo has remained tense. China is greatly concerned, as northern Kosovo is home to ethnic minorities. All parties should fully recognize the sensitivity and complexity that characterize the situation on the ground, address their differences with prudence and through dialogue and negotiation, and refrain from any action that may further aggravate tensions.

China once again calls upon the parties concerned to take measures to ease the tension in northern Kosovo and prevent the further escalation of violence. We hope that the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the International Security Force in Kosovo will play a constructive role in maintaining stability in the situation in northern Kosovo, as mandated by the resolutions of the Security Council.

The situation in Kosovo bears on the peace and stability of the Balkan region and even of the entire European region. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia should be respected. Resolution 1244 (1999) is an important legal basis for the settlement of the question of Kosovo, which should be achieved within the framework of that resolution and by the parties themselves through dialogue, consultation, negotiation and other peaceful means.

China has taken note of the resumption of talks between Serbia and Kosovo and hopes that the two parties will continue to settle their differences through negotiation. Against that background, we deplore the tension that has re-emerged in northern Kosovo.

China is deeply concerned about the illicit trafficking in human organs. Any action that violates the norms of international law, and international humanitarian law in particular, is not to be condoned. Serbia's concern about the matter is justified. We support the United Nations carrying out investigations into the relevant cases.

China appreciates the activities being carried out by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative Zarif and supports the Mission's continuing to play a positive role in maintaining peace and stability in Kosovo and the entire region of the Balkans.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): I would like to thank Mr. Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, for his insightful remarks. I also thank Mr. Enver Hoxhaj for his statement. I congratulate Mr. Farid Zarif on his appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and thank him for the update on the situation in Kosovo.

The last few months have been marked by intense activities related to efforts to address the border incidents in northern Kosovo. The Council met on several occasions to address the crisis and to create a non-confrontational atmosphere. In addition, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and other actors have also engaged the parties in order to arrest the deteriorating security situation and foster peace in Kosovo. Those responses were, in our view, timely, as they directly contributed to defusing the tension in the territory.

We are, however, under no illusion that the problem is solved. Yesterday's incident seems to confirm our fears. Those disturbing events, in addition to the deteriorating inter-ethnic relations, remind us once again of the imperative of a decisive response to the outstanding issues in the territory.

We share the assessment in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/675) that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and International Security Force in Kosovo should actively engage with the northern Kosovo Serbs to increase coordination and information-sharing and build confidence in the communities. The parties should engage assiduously in promoting reconciliation and the peaceful settlement of pending issues through negotiations rather than resorting to unilateral action or violence.

It is also essential that all international presences in Kosovo strengthen their cooperation and communication in order to maximize the impact of their common efforts to maintain peace and stability on the ground. To underpin those efforts, regional and international actors must speak with one voice and work together to preserve peace and security in Kosovo and the region.

The resumption of European Union-facilitated talks is a positive development; the parties have a lot to gain from them. Indeed, the agreements reached during the meetings in September and the positive developments which followed in the area of trade are indicative of the benefits derivable from such talks. The international community, including the Security Council, should do more to build confidence and trust among the parties in order to sustain the momentum of peace talks.

We are concerned by the low number of returns recorded during the reporting period. The Special Representative has attributed those developments to, among other reasons, fewer housing reconstruction projects. It is important to invest more resources in providing the infrastructure necessary to promote the viability and conditions of return. In addition, concerted efforts on the part of law enforcement authorities in preventing harassment and attacks on returnees will go a long way towards promoting safe returns, as well as reconciliation and the long-term stability and development of Kosovo. We urge the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the international community to continue to promote an environment conducive to returns.

Nigeria wishes to underline the need to bring to justice those persons involved in inhuman treatment and the illicit trafficking in human organs. We are also convinced of the need to accommodate the views and concerns of all stakeholders in designing the form for these investigations, which, as we have previously indicated, will ensure that the final outcome of such investigations will enjoy the broadest possible support.

We commend UNMIK for its efforts to promote security and stability in Kosovo and the entire region. UNMIK's unrelenting engagement with the parties to the agreements with regard to such areas as the rule of law, cultural and religious heritage, returns, reconciliation and respect for human rights in Kosovo continues to enjoy strong support. We express our appreciation to Special Representative Zarif and the staff of UNMIK for their valuable contributions and ensure the Mission of Nigeria's support in its work.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Enver Hoxhaj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, for their statements. I also congratulate Mr. Farid Zarif on his appointment.

The situation in northern Kosovo has been the subject of numerous Council meetings since the end of July, and I will therefore skip the origins and evolution of the incidents, which have been covered in detail in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/675). However, new confrontations have recently occurred that have resulted in about 25 wounded Kosovo Force (KFOR) soldiers, among whom two were hit by bullets. Such violent attacks against the international mission charged with guaranteeing the safety of the civilian populations are unacceptable. France condemns those deliberate attacks against staff of NATO and the European Union, who are carrying out tasks under a United Nations mandate.

The responses of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and KFOR in confronting those acts of violence have been adequate and proportional. Those interventions in consultation with the local authorities have led to reduced tensions, but the roadblocks in northern Kosovo continue to impede implementation of the international contingents' mandate and to make civilian life difficult. We therefore call for the immediate removal of the roadblocks and for respect for the right of freedom of movement in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

A return to calm is above all in the interest of the inhabitants of northern Kosovo, who are the first to suffer from the impediments to free movement. Neither the international community nor neighbouring States desire to see the inhabitants or their territory isolated or subject to control by the criminal networks responsible for violence, which is not motivated by nationalism, but because border controls make the trafficking by which they earn their living more difficult. Our adversary is the organized criminal networks that manipulate the population, not the population itself.

The resumption of commercial relations between Serbia and Kosovo, the EULEX presence at Gates 1 and 31 in conformity with its 2008 United Nations mandate, and the return to dialogue facilitated by the European Union between Belgrade and Pristina on 21 November and tomorrow, 30 November, are positive developments that must be encouraged.

A return to calm is in the interests of Belgrade and Pristina, which want to move closer to the

European Union. The differences between the parties must be resolved through dialogue and a spirit of compromise. We call upon Serbia and Kosovo to pursue that dialogue responsibly and to focus their efforts on accession to the European Union, based on the recommendations contained in the last progress report of the European Commission and to abstain from all acts, and statements that could worsen tensions.

Finally, we welcome Mr. Williamson's appointment to lead the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force in charge of investigating the allegations of illicit trafficking in human organs, as described in the report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which was published at the end of 2010.

France calls upon all States of the region to promote cooperation with EULEX and welcomes their expressed readiness to cooperate with the investigation. EULEX thus has the resources to undertake a credible investigation that should be carried out calmly without any undue influence being brought to bear in the context of dialogue.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Zarif for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2011/675). I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate him on his official appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK and to wish him successful and productive work in this important post.

The Russian Federation welcomes the participation in today's meeting of the Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and shares his concerns.

We have listened attentively to the statement of Mr. Hoxhaj. We note the non-compliance with the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999). The position of the Russian Federation in not recognizing Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence remains unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains in full force and is still considered by all as the binding international legal base for settling Kosovo and providing security in the area.

We believe it important for the interested parties to resume their dialogue aimed at a formula for a durable settlement of the Kosovo problem. Unilateral actions of Pristina and the international presence in northern Kosovo are unacceptable.

The Russian Federation is seriously concerned by the abrupt deterioration in the situation in the northern part of the district. There have even been certain flagrant incidents. For example, on 9 November in one of the neighbourhoods of Kosovska Mitrovica, a mixed ethnic area, a group of Albanians opened machine gun fire on three Serbs, one of whom died in hospital shortly thereafter. It is quite telling that during the burial service on the shore of the Ibar River, Albanians partied openly to loud music.

The Kosovo Force (KFOR) is also forcefully pressuring Kosovo Serbs. Only yesterday, the two groups were engaged in yet another skirmish, as NATO forces were capturing a Serbian barricade in the municipality of Zubin Potok. Dozens of casualties occurred on both sides. The KFOR command has issued threats of using their weapons with lethal intent. It is patently obvious to us that that type of situation could be avoided if KFOR focused not on removing the Serbian barricades that were erected in reaction to Pristina's provocative attempts to take control over the administrative border with Serbia, but on providing security in the interest of all of the district's inhabitants as per its mandate.

The statements of some of our Council colleagues to the effect that the actions of KFOR and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) are somehow ensuring the protection of freedom of movement as well as a single customs space for Kosovo as provided under resolution 1244 (1999) are nothing more than a bit of semantic sleight of hand. Let us not forget that those mandates were adopted under conditions when, under resolution 1244 (1999), Kosovo enjoyed substantial autonomy as a union republic of Yugoslavia. The resolution also called for protection of the interests of the Serbian population of the district and for providing for its security. We thus oppose selective implementation of the mandates of KFOR and EULEX, which openly plays into the hands of the Kosovo authorities.

The use of force to implement legislation of the so-called Republic of Kosovo is outside the mandates of those international entities and violates the principle of their neutral status. In that context and bearing in mind the communications on that topic submitted by

the Government of Serbia to the Secretary-General, the Russian Federation calls for a thorough investigation of the incident of 27 September, where KFOR used weapons that resulted in civilian casualties.

We are left to wonder: Why is it that after 12 years of efforts, the international community has been unable to ensure safe living conditions for one of the parties to the Kosovo conflict? In that regard, we believe it would be advisable that in his next report, the Secretary-General conduct an in-depth analysis of the ways in which the international presences are implementing their security mandates to protect the rights of the entire population of Kosovo.

In equal measure, we call for a full and objective investigation of the facts related to the illicit trafficking in human organs uncovered by Mr. Dick Marty, Special Rapporteur of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly. In our view, such an investigation should proceed under United Nations auspices and report to the Security Council. Here we note the extremely unsatisfactory situation in Kosovo relating to witness protection, which has been confirmed by the Council of Europe. Those facts have been blatantly ignored, and as a result key witnesses have been eliminated.

The security situation in the district remains tense, owing most of all to Pristina's growing tendency to use force to control Serb-inhabited regions. Attacks such as those of 2004 must not be allowed. The situation regarding the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Kosovo, most of whom are Serb, remains unsatisfactory. There are many reasons for that, including the fact that the IDPs have no assurance of safety. The ransacking of homes and theft of property of Kosovo Serbs has been going on with impunity. International presences must take all necessary measures to protect Serbian Orthodox holy sites and believers. We share the concern of the authorities of Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church with the situation developing in relation to the handover by NATO forces of protective responsibilities of significant Serbian cultural and religious heritage sites to the Kosovo police. These actions could cause additional security tensions in Kosovo.

The Mission in Kosovo, on the basis of its Security Council mandate, must play as active a role as possible in promoting the Kosovo settlement process. We call on UNMIK to fulfil its duties, including with regard to the external representation of Kosovo in regional and international organizations and mechanisms. We hope the new Head of UNMIK will provide the corresponding impulse to the Mission's work.

We believe that Council measures must send an unambiguous signal to both the Kosovo parties and the international presences on the need to refrain from violence and to continue the dialogue. The Russian delegation will circulate a draft presidential statement for the press.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): Let me join my colleagues in congratulating Mr. Zarif on his recent appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and welcoming His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Foreign Minister of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Enver Hoxhaj, Foreign Minister of Kosovo.

We view the situation in the northern part of Kosovo with great concern. The last month has seen a significant deterioration in the security situation because of provocative action by Kosovo's Serb demonstrators. Only yesterday we witnessed a new level of violence perpetrated by Kosovo Serb demonstrators against soldiers of the Kosovo Force (KFOR). While implementing their mandate to ensure freedom of movement, KFOR troops were attacked with stones, fireworks and Molotov cocktails. Thirty KFOR soldiers from Germany and Austria were wounded. Among them, two German soldiers sustained gunshot wounds from small arms fired from the sidelines of the demonstration.

Let me make this point in no uncertain terms: any use of violence against KFOR or the other international presences is unacceptable. It must be condemned in the strongest terms. Both KFOR and the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) are fulfilling their mandate to ensure and maintain a safe environment, including freedom of movement, and to establish the rule of law. They act in full compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Attacks against KFOR are thus attacks against the integrity and authority of the Security Council.

We call on all citizens in Kosovo, including in northern Kosovo, to refrain from any violence. We also call on the Serbian authorities to exert their influence on those responsible for inciting and resorting to violence.

We have full confidence in the work of KFOR and EULEX. All parties concerned have to cooperate fully with the international presences. Erecting barricades to restrict the freedom of movement in this part of Kosovo is unacceptable. In this context, I would like to welcome the call by President Tadić this morning on the people in northern Kosovo to dismantle the roadblocks and to refrain from violence. We explicitly welcome that call by President Tadić. Our objective is peace and stability in the region with a clear European perspective.

It is also pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/675) that the outstanding issues can be resolved only through peaceful means. The European Union-mandated dialogue is at the core of the process that leads to peace and stability in the region.

Germany actively supports the process of dialogue under the auspices of Mrs. Ashton. This open and constructive dialogue is designed to improve the daily lives of citizens in both countries, to promote the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, and to pave the way for both countries to a secure, European future. We thus welcome the new round of bilateral talks that took place on 21 and 22 November, which produced an agreement by both parties on mutual recognition of school and university diplomas. We call on both sides to build on the positive momentum and reach further tangible results in the meeting on 30 November and to ensure swift implementation of the agreements already reached.

We deplore the increase in incidents of crime, including those affecting minority communities, as described in the Secretary-General's report. Widespread organized crime remains a serious issue in Kosovo. Nonetheless, we welcome the efforts by the Kosovo authorities to address this issue. We share the observation in the report on the overall positive developments with regard to the rule of law in Kosovo and the positive impact on the everyday life of the citizens of Kosovo and the region. We also appreciate the facilitating role played by UNMIK, be it with respect to cooperation between Kosovo authorities and INTERPOL, or between the Serbian and the Kosovo Ministries of Justice.

EULEX has achieved further progress in recent months in its full investigation of the allegations of despicable crimes committed against Serbian nationals during, and after the end of, the armed conflict in Kosovo. With the appointment of Mr. Clint Williamson as lead prosecutor for the Special Investigative Task Force, a distinguished and capable prosecutor has been tasked to lead the investigation. This development has also been welcomed by Foreign Minister Jeremić. In particular, I welcome that Mr. Williamson has received full support from Kosovo, Serbia and Albania.

We have already stated that in our view that there is no doubt that the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo has the capacities, the competence and the jurisdiction to carry out these investigations. EULEX has Germany's full support and confidence. EULEX has opened a preliminary investigation, and EULEX prosecutors have met with Senator Marty to discuss his findings. The Government of Kosovo is ready to cooperate fully. EULEX has established good cooperation with the authorities in Belgrade and Tirana. EULEX prosecutors have already met twice with the General Prosecutor of Albania on the matter. We therefore do not believe it is necessary to set up an additional mechanism for investigations, in the light of the EULEX mandate.

In conclusion, let me underline once more that Germany will continue to closely monitor the developments in Kosovo. We remain committed to the European perspective of the whole region. We appreciate the contribution by UNMIK to peace and stability and commend the dedication and service of its staff.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset I wish to congratulate Mr. Farid Zarif on his appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I wish him every success, and I thank him for his briefing today. I also would like to welcome His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Jeremić, and to thank him for his statement. I also wish to thank Mr. Hoxhaj for his statement.

I wish to renew our support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for its role in facilitating reconciliation, supporting security and enhancing human rights. We also wish to indicate the positive role that it plays in several issues, such as missing persons and the protection of religious and cultural heritage, as well as in facilitating contacts between the different groups. We consider it important

that coordination and cooperation continue between UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) within the status-neutral framework in Kosovo, as stated in resolution 1244 (1999).

With regard to security, we would like to note the coordinated measures adopted by local authorities to combat money-laundering, smuggling and the drug trade, and the resulting decrease in the crime rate.

We share the concern of the Secretary-General over the deterioration of the security situation in northern Kosovo and the accompanying tension and polarization among the different communities in the north. The developments concerning Gates 1 and 31 have shown, over the past few months, that any outstanding issue between the two sides may quickly become contentious and a source of tension and violence, seriously hampering the dialogue process. It is therefore important, in the coming stage, to refrain from taking any unilateral action or resorting to violence, and to focus efforts on achieving reconciliation among the communities and setting the stage for dialogue.

In that context, we urge all influential parties in the region to play a facilitating and supportive role in efforts to build confidence among the communities and the parties. That will have a positive influence on the dialogue and on the security situation in the north.

We take note of the periodic coordination meetings held with representatives of northern Kosovo Serbs, the United Nations and the European Union Missions and KFOR, as part of efforts to build confidence among local communities.

We welcome the continued cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina, in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to clarify the fate of those persons still missing. Despite the fact that progress in disclosing the fate of missing persons is still slow, we nevertheless view such efforts as a key component of any reconciliation among communities.

In conclusion, as to allegations of inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo in 1999, we stress the importance of adopting measures that will guarantee effective protection for witnesses. We call for a comprehensive and transparent investigation that will reveal the truth and hold the perpetrators to account, as there can be no genuine reconciliation or sustainable peace without justice.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): South Africa would like to congratulate Mr. Farid Zarif on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. We also thank him for his briefing. We also join others in welcoming Foreign Minister Jeremić of Serbia to the Council and in thanking him for his statement. We also welcome Mr. Hoxhaj and thank him for his statement as well.

South Africa remains concerned about the developments in North Kosovo. We condemn all forms of violence by all sides, including the shooting that wounded NATO soldiers and injured more than 20 others, as violence threatens peace and stability in the region. All parties should exercise restraint and refrain from unilateral actions and the use of force, since that would reverse the gains made by the parties in their dialogue processes and ultimately make reconciliation more difficult to achieve.

My delegation is also concerned about the deterioration in inter-ethnic relations throughout Kosovo, which in our view does not contribute to the reconciliation and dialogue process. A number of incidents that have been reported by the Secretary-General are of concern to us, including the contamination of a well supplying potable water and the desecration of cemeteries.

Tensions are worsened by the perception of Kosovo Serbs regarding the lack of status neutrality of the international presence, especially following the actions of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) in north Kosovo.

South Africa reiterates its position that Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) remains in force and forms the basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo. It is therefore incumbent on the international presences in Kosovo, including KFOR and EULEX, to maintain a status-neutral position in the execution of their respective mandates, in line with the presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/44) adopted by the Council in November 2008.

South Africa continues to support the dialogue process between the parties, as mandated by the

General Assembly. Moreover, we believe that the resumption of talks between the parties is an important confidence-building measure that should improve trust and allow them to address all outstanding issues. We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that unresolved issues threaten peace and stability in the region. In that regard, my delegation urges all parties to show cooperation and flexibility in finding solutions to the outstanding issues, including border concerns. Negotiations remain the only way to produce a mutually beneficial and sustainable solution.

With regard to the allegations of trafficking in human organs, we reiterate our position that a credible, thorough, impartial and independent inquiry into those allegations should be conducted. The death of a key witness in a war crimes case raises concerns about witness protection. In that regard, we share the concerns of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that an independent witness- and victim-protection system is necessary.

In conclusion, South Africa once more urges both sides to refrain from taking any actions that will undermine the achievements attained in the dialogue process. We therefore call on the parties to show flexibility, with a view to enhancing their engagement in order to resolve outstanding matters and for reconciliation to prevail.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to welcome Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and congratulate him on his recent appointment. We thank him for his briefing on the situation in Kosovo and for the accompanying report (S/2011/675), which provides a detailed description of recent events, the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which he leads, and efforts to find lasting peace in the region.

We regret the various incidents that have occurred in border areas, the most recent being yesterday, when several NATO soldiers were injured and two were shot as they attempted to dismantle roadblocks that had been set up in some areas. We also regret the death of a Serbian civilian and two other individuals who were injured at the beginning of this month.

Colombia urges the parties to adopt measures that will help to reduce tensions and prevent the emergence of new crises. At the same time, we encourage the parties to renew their efforts to achieve peaceful coexistence and deepen their commitment to dialogue in order to resolve the issues under dispute.

We thank Foreign Ministers Vuk Jeremić and Enver Hoxhaj for their statements, which show that there is clear intent to engage in dialogue and that progress has been made in that regard. However, their remarks also reveal a degree of harshness. I believe that it is crucial to find some terms for coming together. In that spirit, we call on local authorities to improve their mechanisms for cooperation, good-neighbourliness and the early settlement of disputes. We are convinced that the resulting arrangements will always play a role in creating unity and harmony, and will surely set the best example on both sides of the border.

We note with optimism tomorrow's meeting between the parties, to be held in Brussels, and hope that steps will be taken there to consolidate the process on the basis of agreements reached in previous rounds of talks, including those held in that city on 21 and 22 November. The meeting will provide an opportunity for convergence and, in turn, make it possible for the parties to resolve their problems. We hope that progress is made on practical matters and in areas of cooperation, such as the energy and telecommunications sectors, as has been done with regard to the recognition of university degrees.

My country takes an optimistic view of the area's economic outlook. Its proximity to the European Union makes it a valid trading partner, which augurs well for further physical, customs and transport integration. The parties can take the first step in that direction by avoiding confrontational language, which will facilitate efforts to reach agreements that will benefit all parties.

With regard to allegations involving the crimes of murder, inhuman treatment of people, illegal trafficking in human organs and violations of human dignity, which we have addressed here on several occasions, we note with interest the efforts being made to pursue the ongoing investigations and trials as described in the most recent report. We hope that in the future, it will be possible to identify those responsible for those crimes and bring them to justice.

We would underscore what was said in the report with regard to the problem of missing persons, which remains a major obstacle to community reconciliation and continues to undermine the returns process.

Colombia believes that those investigations must be fully completed so as to lay the groundwork for social reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Finally, according to the latest report, the process of returns has been slow. We therefore call for extraordinary efforts to establish the conditions necessary to allow speedy returns to communities in a climate of safety and confidence.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I welcome His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and thank him for his statement. I also welcome Mr. Farid Zarif and congratulate him on his appointment. I thank him for his briefing and wish him a successful tenure as Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I also thank Mr. Enver Hoxhaj for his remarks.

Brazil wishes that we could dedicate a larger part of our statement today to positive developments during the reporting period, such as progress on the issue of stamps and trade flows. Unfortunately, recent negative events have taken the forefront. Brazil is concerned over the increase of tensions between Belgrade and Pristina, in particular clashes between the population in the area and the Kosovo Force and police forces. We join the Secretary-General in calling on both sides, as well as on the communities on the ground, to act with restraint and patience as they seek a peaceful solution to the crisis.

The underlying tensions that have translated into these incidents are a reminder of the urgent need to address the broader unresolved issues in the region. A spirit of compromise must guide actions by all parties. Brazil expects that discussions between Belgrade and Pristina, which have been following a positive course, will resume shortly in order to build confidence and to promote progress that benefit the populations of the area.

Brazil reaffirms its belief that resolution 1244 (1999) offers an adequate framework for a negotiated settlement, under the auspices of the Security Council and with the support of UNMIK and regional organizations.

We remain concerned over the allegations of inhuman treatment of people and trafficking in human organs in Kosovo. We are encouraged by the willingness of the parties to cooperate in the investigation of these cases, which must be subject to independent and credible scrutiny. In this regard, we note the ongoing investigations being carried out by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and reiterate our interest in exploring options that take into account the need to involve various jurisdictions and the importance of ensuring consistency with resolution 1244 (1999).

UNMIK's role is crucial to the stability of the region. We commend the positive work the Mission has undertaken to facilitate communications between the parties and to create conditions for reaching agreement on a number of issues. The Council should continue to keep political developments in Kosovo under close review and to encourage further dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Every effort must be made to find creative solutions to the pending issues, while maintaining peace in the region. The long-term benefits of peaceful dialogue between the parties must be made evident to all stakeholders.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, the new Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the situation in that country. We wish once again to express our appreciation to him and his team for their commitment to peace and stability in Kosovo.

I also welcome the presence here today of the Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, and I thank them for their respective statements.

My delegation will focus its statement on the security and political aspects of the situation, particularly in northern Kosovo, which has drawn the attention of UNMIK and other international missions operating under resolution 1244 (1999).

The events of July, which we all regretted, contributed in large measure to the deterioration of the security situation in northern Kosovo. According to the report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2011/675), they have also hindered the continuation of political dialogue. As recently as yesterday, an incident arose in which two soldiers of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) were wounded, which we wholeheartedly deplore. We call on all parties to exercise restraint and to resort to dialogue and cooperation to resolve issues of common interest. Peace and sustainable security in the region can be established only through such means.

The efforts of the international organizations — UNMIK, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and KFOR — should be welcomed, as should the resumption on 21 November in Brussels of discussions between Belgrade and Pristina. My delegation believes that these discussions, pertaining to subjects that are vital to peace and security in the Balkans, must be strongly supported by the international community.

Furthermore, the conclusion of an agreement on customs stamps in Kosovo and the resumption of trade between Kosovo and Serbia are achievements that deserve the support of the Council. We call on the parties to be equally resolved to end the current impasse with respect to the reopening of the northern border posts. My country calls on all parties to refrain from taking any unilateral action that could spark new tensions.

As we have often said in prior statements, we remain convinced that finding a settlement in Kosovo is the primary responsibility of the parties directly involved. Indeed, it is up to them to establish the conditions necessary to a peaceful settlement of the situation, which would contribute greatly to the implementation of the European perspectives of Serbia and Kosovo. Lastly, we reiterate that the international community should continue its financial support for the protection of cultural and religious heritage and for the work of the Working Group on Missing persons. It should also facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homes.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): On behalf of the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2011/675). We also welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, and thank him for his comprehensive briefing. We would like to express our support to the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We welcome the participation in today's meeting of His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, as well as Mr. Enver Hoxhaj.

Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterates its appreciation for UNMIK's efforts in fulfilling its mandate, including support for the process of reconciliation, facilitation of constructive dialogue and regional cooperation, its focus on mediation between the communities, as well as its support to minority communities.

During the reporting period, as a result of recent incidents that we strongly condemn, the security situation, mainly in northern Kosovo, has been deteriorating. Furthermore, these latest developments have also resulted in the worsening of inter-ethnic relations throughout Kosovo, the polarization of political positions, and the widening of gaps between the communities. The aforementioned incidents and the overall situation in Kosovo are causes of concern for our delegation.

Taking into account all the circumstances, now more than ever we remain convinced that sustained dialogue is indispensable to achieving mutually acceptable solutions to all outstanding issues in Kosovo. It is therefore necessary that both sides remain committed to the resumption of dialogue on pending issues, facilitated by the European Union. We believe that the international community, as well as all relevant stakeholders, should continue their efforts to create conditions for the peaceful resolution of long-standing issues for the benefit of all.

It is our well-known position that the rule of law is crucial to stability and progress in the Balkans. In that regard, we reiterate our support to the activities of UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, operating within the status-neutral framework of the United Nations.

In the context of improving inter-community dialogue and building confidence among the parties, we believe in the crucial role of UNMIK and welcome its efforts to decrease tensions, draw attention to common needs and provide conditions conducive to sustainable returns.

The problem of missing persons remains a great challenge to the process of reconciliation between the communities and prolongs the process of returns. In that context, we take positive note of the fact that the Belgrade-Pristina Working Group on Missing Persons resumed its activities and cooperation on that important issue. Despite all efforts, the number of voluntary returns remains low, including due to socio-economic difficulties associated with the reintegration of returnees and the tense security situation.

During the reporting period, UNMIK, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Danish Refugee Council facilitated several go-and-see and go-and-inform visits, which provided displaced persons an opportunity to visit their properties and make first-hand assessments of conditions in the receiving community.

In conclusion, we reiterate our enduring position that stability and security in Kosovo are of great significance for achieving lasting peace and prosperity in our region. We consider that the international community should continue to play an important role in supporting the aspirations of the countries of the region towards their integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina commends the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, operating within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), and its role of maintaining peace, security, stability and respect of human rights in Kosovo.

The President: I shall now make a brief statement in my national capacity.

Like previous speakers, I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for his comprehensive briefing. I congratulate him on his appointment and wish him all the best in his challenging tasks. I also thank Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Foreign Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Enver Hoxjah, Foreign Minister of Kosovo, for their statements.

I start by expressing our deep concern about the escalation of violence directed against United Nations-mandated international forces in Kosovo, which has resulted in a significant number of wounded, among whom were 12 Portuguese soldiers, as mentioned by Mr. Zarif. Portugal condemns, in the strongest terms, those attacks and reiterates that all attempts to hamper, by the use of force, the freedom of movement in northern Kosovo are totally unacceptable and can only worsen an already very tense situation. Portugal appeals, in unequivocal terms, for restraint. It is fundamental to deflate the present situation in order to prevent an even more dangerous escalation of tensions, further bloodshed and the worsening of the situation of tens of thousands of civilians.

Strengthened political dialogue is, from our point of view, the only way to achieve that goal. In that regard, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has undertaken serious efforts to bring together relevant political players in the north of Kosovo and to supplement several failures in fundamental supplies, thereby contributing importantly to a safer and more secure environment. Those efforts should be commended.

Also on the issue of political dialogue, we welcome the resumption of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on 21 November. The latest agreement between the parties on the mutual recognition of university diplomas is a welcome development. Portugal believes that the European perspective of Serbia and Kosovo must be a constant reminder to both parties of the importance of remaining constructively engaged in their negotiations. While we are aware of the challenges ahead, we stress that time is of the paramount importance on this issue. We appeal to both parties to renew their efforts, both internally and among each other, to make headway on all fundamental issues.

We would like to underline the importance of some of the issues mentioned in the UNMIK report (S/2011/675). We welcome the fact that several important Serbia Orthodox Church events took place in Kosovo without incident. The freedom of worship is an essential element of democratic conviviality and respect for the rule of law, and must be protected. Unfortunately, there was a worrying increase in incidents affecting minority communities Kosovo-wide. Indeed, progress in upholding minority rights is fundamental to peace and security in Kosovo and in the Western Balkans.

On the report of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), I would like to underline that the Mission's essential role in promoting and upholding the rule of law and law enforcement in Kosovo should be duly appreciated. Portugal has consistently been a strong promoter of the role that the Rule of Law Mission plays in Kosovo. But Portugal continues to believe that the Council would benefit from hearing more directly about the work of EULEX and its future perspectives on the investigations it has undertaken in areas as diverse and as serious as human organ trafficking, tax evasion, border control and the fight against corruption.

My final words are to express my appreciation for, and encouragement of, the work of the various

international presences in Kosovo. Winter is a particularly challenging time in Kosovo, and may prove to be the source of more instability. The mandates of UNMIK, the Kosovo Force and EULEX, among others, aim to correspond as much as possible to guaranteeing peace, stability and justice to the country. They will continue to do so under the Security Council's oversight and with its help.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Jeremić has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now call on him.

Mr. Jeremić (Serbia): I would like to briefly address some of the remarks made in the Chamber this morning.

First of all, I would like to refer to the so-called parallel structures. In order to have something parallel, one needs to have something to which it is parallel. Those are the only structures that exist in that part of our sovereign province. Those are the only structures that are providing any kind of order in that part of the territory. There are no other structures. Truly parallel structures are ones that are not in line with resolution 1244 (1999), but that are organized based on the unilateral declaration of independence of 17 February 2008.

I think that the lack of trust is what is really at the heart of what we are discussing here. I remember the time when there was very little trust in Serbian institutions in Kosovo and when the whole series of parallel structures — actually, the entire life of Kosovo Albanians — was organized in a way that was entirely parallel to the legal institutions of the Republic of Serbia. At that time, every single country in the world recognized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. I am referring to the pre-1999 period. They were structures that had absolute parallelism with the legal structures of the Republic of Serbia, because the Albanians had no trust in the structures of the Republic of Serbia. Today, the situation is pretty much parallel in the north. Kosovo Serbs have zero trust in the structures that are Pristina-based. That is simply a fact of life and a part of the reality that we have to take into account when we try to resolve peacefully the problem that we have at hand.

In response to a statement made here with regard to the Ahtisaari Plan, I would like to underline that this Plan was not in line with resolution 1244 (1999). It was discussed here in the Chamber on numerous occasions and failed to receive the support of the Council. I would like to remind members that, despite numerous attempts, the Ahtisaari Plan did not receive the endorsement of the Council. For us in Serbia, it is null and void.

In speaking about human organ harvesting and trafficking, one country here today repeatedly referred to that as organized crime. It may be organized crime if one is trying to sell somebody's organs on the international black market for organs, but it is a war crime when several hundred civilians are allegedly taken to a clinic to be killed and their organs removed during a conflict. That is a war crime, not organized crime, and it should be treated as such.

All of the war crimes committed in the wars of Yugoslav succession have so far been treated in the same way, with the Security Council being kept abreast of what was going on in the investigations. What we are asking for is simply to be treated in the same way and that this serious, heinous allegation of a war crime be treated in the same way as any other war crime, namely, that it not be hidden from the international community. That is what the families of the victims demand.

Serbia strongly reiterates the need for transparency and fairness in this investigation. I appeal to the members of the Security Council to allow fairness and transparency to prevail for the sake of the families of the victims.

Finally, I would like to underline once again that Serbia has made and will continue to make strong calls for peace and stability inside the territory. President Tadić today made a very strong call for that, and I wish to reiterate it here in this Chamber. We need to refrain from the use of force and from violence. Barricades are not in anyone's interest, but they must not be removed violently; that is only going to lead to more violence. The best way to ensure full freedom of movement in the territory is through dialogue, engagement and close work between the parties, especially the parties on the ground, all of which Serbia strongly supports.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Hoxhaj.

Mr. Hoxhaj: I am going to make some remarks not about the past but about the future.

First, I think that it is necessary for all sides to call for a stop to the violence in the northern part of Kosovo, and for the situation there to show some improvement 12 years after the war.

Secondly, security and stability in that part of Kosovo, within Kosovo as a whole and in the region are always going to be a challenge as long as security forces, paramilitary organizations and police forces from the Republic of Serbia are operating in that part of Kosovo. Accordingly, it is really time for Serbia to dismantle these structures. We have seen the same phenomenon occur everywhere in the former Yugoslavia over the past 20 years; that has been the situation from 1991 until today.

Thirdly, we are very interested in solving all problems through dialogue, and we call on Serbia to start implementing the agreements reached in Brussels. To date, there has been the possibility of seeing implementation only of the agreement on customs stamps, but nothing else. Nothing else has been implemented until now.

Regarding the barricades, the European Union insists on two principles — freedom of movement of peoples and freedom of movement of goods. If Serbia aspires to European Union candidate status but is putting up barricades in a part of another country, I think that is the best evidence of how interested Serbia is in a European future.

I will stop here. I am not interested in bothering the Council with more remarks. At the same time, I call on my friends not to bring the spirit of a Balkan country election campaign into a meeting of the Security Council.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.